

of defence. The Bosphorus and Hellespont may be considered as the two gates of Constantinople; and the prince who procured those important passages could always shut them against a naval enemy and open them to the fleets of commerce. The preservation of the Eastern provinces may, in some degree, be ascribed to the policy of Constantine, as the barbarians of the Euxine, who, in the preceding age, had poured down their armaments into the heart of the Mediterranean, soon desisted from the exercise of piracy and despaired of facing this insurmountable barrier. When the gates of the Hellespont and Bosphorus were shut, the capital still enjoyed, within their spacious inclosure, every production which could supply the wants, or gratify the luxury, of its numerous inhabitants. The seacoasts of Thrace and Bithynia, which languish under the weight of Turkish oppression, still exhibit a rich prospect of vineyards, of gardens and plentiful harvests; and the Propontis has ever been renowned for an inexhaustible store of the most exquisite fish, that are taken in their stated seasons without skill and almost without labour. But, when the passages of the Straits were thrown open for trade, they alternately admitted the natural and artificial riches of the North and South, of the Euxine and the Mediterranean. Whatever rude commodities were collected in the forests of Germany and Scythia, as far as the sources of the Tanais and the Borysthenes, whatever was manufactured by the skill of Europe and of Asia, the corn of Egypt and the gems and spices of the farthest India, were brought by the varying winds into the port of Constantinople, which, for many ages, attracted the commerce of the ancient world."

From a strategical point of view, it was of inestimable advantage that the capital and military centre